

János Áder, President of Hungary

Viktor Mihály Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary

Donald Tusk, President, European Council

Jean-Claude Juncker, President, European Commission

Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations

Antonio Tajani, President, European Parliament

Ministers of Foreign Affairs, EU Member States

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General, Council of Europe

Liliane Maury Pasquier, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

Joseph Daul, President, European People's party (EPP)

Antonio López-Istúriz, Secretary General, European People's party (EPP)

Manfred Weber, Chair, European People's party (EPP)

27 June 2018

**Statement by Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
on the Hungarian “Stop Soros” Law**

The Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum notes with dismay the recent controversial legislation passed by the Hungarian government on 20 June on the occasion of the World Refugee Day. The new “Stop Soros” provision – Article 353A of the Criminal Code – introduces the offence of “facilitating irregular migration” essentially tightening the rules on granting asylum and criminalising actions helping undocumented migrants and asylum seekers.

According to the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, while Article 11 (Freedom of Assembly) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) does justify some restrictive measures preventing disorder or crime, the broad wording of Article 353A could allow for abuses by the government against political opponents and civil society members. It unfairly criminalises activities not directly related to illegal migration, including “preparing or distributing informational materials” or “initiating asylum requests for migrants.” Criminalising such activities hinders the work of humanitarian and other CSOs, disproportionately restricting their rights as guaranteed under the ECHR and international law as such. Declaring advocacy activities on migration illegal violates the freedom of expression secured by Article 10 of the ECHR.

This legislation also obliges organisations to declare the funding received from abroad and pay taxes on such donations. Such measures ultimately put into a privileged position those

organisations relying on government support and would outlaw those working with foreign donors.

The Steering Committee calls on Janos Ader, the President of Hungary, to veto the law on granting asylum, which runs counter to European values that have in the past favoured Hungarians fleeing from repression as in 1956 after the uprising against Soviet rule. Indeed, in 1848 the Hungarian combatants sought and received refuge in the Ottoman Empire in the wake of a failed war for independence in an act of generosity that transcended religious differences between Christians and Muslims.

If the present legislation clamping down on asylum seekers is enforced it should be investigated by the European Commission as contradicting the European values and thus the European People's party (EPP) should re-visit the membership of Hungary's ruling Fidesz party in the EPP on such grounds.

Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum